Living down a bad reputation

Although I realise that there are different types of diabetes and that each case must be treated separately and according to expert advice, my experience leads me to wonder whether this kind of treatment, which I have used successfully for so long, is being used today as often as it should be, because it seems to me to be so reasonable. Its main advantage is that by spreading the intake of insulin more evenly over each 24 hour period and therefore injecting it in smaller doses the patient can more easily maintain a stable blood sugar level and enjoy a flexible lifestyle free from any complications associated with poor control. In this respect it seems indeed to have something in common with many of the most recent developments in treatment, such as infusion pumps, button infusers, Penjects, and the like.

It is also my opinion that, given a sound understanding of the nature of diabetes and a clear recognition of the powerful effect of insulin, the following are the only other essential requirements for its successful use:

(1) A knowledge of at least the carbohydrate content of different foodstuffs.

(2) The ability to assess how much insulin is needed in one's own case to deal with any given quantity of carbohydrate.

(3) A willingness to check the accuracy of one's judgment in these matters by urine or blood tests, carried out three or four times a day during the early learning stage and at longer, varying intervals thereafter according to circumstances.

(4) The ability to recognise in good time the symptoms of an overdose of insulin.

(5) A generally disciplined way of life.

The first of these requirements is quite easy for any reasonably intelligent person to satisfy; the second needs careful study and is greatly helped by experience; the third is just a matter of common sense; the fourth is no more difficult than recognising when one has had enough alcohol to drink; and the last is not a bad rule for anyone, whether diabetic or not. It is also worth remembering that all of these requirements are, if not necessary, at least highly desirable for the successful control of diabetes by any kind of treatment.

Diabetes today is surely one of the least disabling of all disabilities; it just has a bad reputation to live down, and I shall be very happy if my story can contribute to that end.

Life in the Lutyens household

MARY LUTYENS

As the only survivor of Edwin Lutyens's five children I was honoured last February with an invitation to the opening of the new BMA library by HRH The Princess of Wales. I went in some trepidation since I have seen quite a few unhappy alterations to my father's buildings. But all was more than well. His Great Hall had, both architecturally and decoratively, been converted with great sensitivity. The architect was Mr Ivan Nellist of Nellist, Blundell, and Flint, and the conversion was undertaken by the firm of V A T Watkins.

I was secretly amused to see that the colour of the columns happened to be the exact shade of blue very dear to Theosophists in 1911 when my father was commissioned by Mrs Annie Besant, president of the Theosophical Society, to build a new headquarters for the society. At that time most Theosophists believed in the near coming of the world teacher, the Lord Maitreya, and that an Indian boy of 15, Jiddu Krishnamurti, had already been chosen to be the vehicle whose body the Lord Maitreya would occupy when he came. It was said that he had previously occupied the bodies of Sri Krishna and Jesus. The blue of the new library's columns was the exact colour of the Lord Maitreya's aura, seen on the astral plane by the same clairvoyant Theosophist as had chosen Krishnamurti.

After Mrs Besant (who also claimed clairvoyance) had laid the foundation stone of the building she wrote in the *Theosophist* of November 1911:

"Mighty presences graciously grouped themselves above the stone, One of Whom will often be seen hereafter in this place He blessed when He takes the body a-preparing for Him. . . . The walls will echo to the music of His voice."

Crisis building

The building was the cause of a near crisis in my parents' marriage. My mother had become a Theosophist in 1910 and it was through her that my father had met Mrs Besant and received his

From left to right, Barbara, Mary, Elisabeth, Ursula, and Robert Lutyens. About 1909.

commission. The original estimate for the building was £50 000. By 1914 that figure had doubled after Mrs Besant had twice changed her mind about the flat that she wanted on the top floor, had sacked the clerk of works my father had chosen, without seeking his permission, and had insisted on employing only union labour. While she was in India working for Indian Home Rule, Dr (afterwards

London W9 1BN
MARY LUTYENS

Correspondence to: 8 Elizabeth Close, Randolph Avenue, London W9 1BN.

Lord) Haden Guest became her representative for the building. He quarrelled with my father over the increased estimate, going to the length of accusing my father's office of dishonesty. Whereupon my father, outraged, told my mother that he was never to enter his house again. This presented my mother with a grave dilemma, for not only were she and Dr Guest closely associated in a Theosophical Lodge they had started together but she felt that the huge increase in the estimate showed that there must have been some inefficiency at least on the part of my father's office. Besides, she knew that Mrs Besant was having great difficulty in raising even £50 000 from the appeal that she had launched. My mother's problem was solved

Bruce-Porter. He had the wisdom to woo Nanny as well as us children and we all adored him. But he was seldom called in because by then my mother had her own panacea for all small ailments—an ice cold compress round the tummy—so that we never dared complain unless we felt really ill.

I was the youngest of the family and not yet 2 when my mother became a Theosophist. Thereafter, the whole family, with the exception of my father, became vegetarians in accordance with her Theosophical principles. Even Nanny became a vegetarian because she could not bear to refuse us the little bits of her breakfast bacon for which we begged, though the other servants were allowed their meat. Nut cutlets from Shearn's in Tottenham Court Road were a staple of our diet, shaped like lamb cutlets with a piece of raw macaroni sticking out as the bone with a frill round it. I didn't touch meat or fish until I was 18 and then, for social reasons, I forced myself when I went out to eat whatever I was offered, almost heaving over every mouthful.

Theosophists and Marmite sandwiches

My father suffered greatly from the crankiness of his wife and family and from the odd assortment of people who came to the house for Theosophical meetings and Marmite sandwiches. That he continued to adore my mother all his life is something of a miracle. It had been a dream of his ever since their marriage in 1897 to build a little white house for her in the country in the shape of their joint initials (she was Emily Lytton). He never realised this dream. The nearest he ever came to it was the small white house he built in 1902 for his mother in law, "Homewood," at Knebworth, Hertfordshire, where we always spent our Easter holidays as children. Here there were oil lamps and hip baths in front of the fire. There was one bathroom but that was used only by my aunt, Constance Lytton, who lived a semi-invalid life with her mother. As a militant suffragette she had suffered a stroke in 1910 as a result of forced feeding in prison and had become paralysed down her right side.† In 1924 she came under the influence of that controversial character, Homer Lane, who advised her to get away from her mother and make an independent life for herself. She went up to London (the first time she had left "Homewood" for 14 years) to live in a flat that she had rented by post and immediately died of a heart attack.

My father, of course, built his country houses in the days of a plethora of servants—coal fires in every room, lit in the bedrooms when you were called in the morning; brass cans of hot water on the washstands three times a day; the few bathrooms and lavatories far from the bedrooms, hence the ubiquitous chamber pots; back stairs; huge chimney stacks for the heat of the coals to disappear into; sculleries, butlers' pantries, boot rooms, and servants' halls as well as vast kitchens. The servants' quarters on the ground floor plan of one of his large houses took up more space than the reception rooms.

Several of Lutyens's houses have now been turned into flats or hotels. Single families who do still occupy them often have great difficulty in carrying out repairs and in adapting them to modern requirements, especially when they are listed as so many of them are. Drain pipes hidden inside walls certainly add to the elegance of the façade of a building but add far more to the plumber's bill should there be a leak. A Lutyens Trust was formed in 1985 to help owners with conversions and other problems while at the same time "protecting the spirit and substance of Lutyens's work." The trust has already attracted over 200 Friends.

My father's public buildings have their own problems. The Great Hall of BMA House, never completely finished for lack of funds, had become a white elephant, I was told. Impossible to heat, it served no purpose except for badminton. How good it is to know that today, instead of echoing to the outpourings of Theosophy, which had caused my father so much unhappiness, it should be fulfilling a vital function in the greatest of all arts—the art of healing.

Lady Emily Lutyens with Mary; standing, Robert and Barbara; sitting, Ursula and Elisabeth. 1908.

when Dr Guest went off to Paris in charge of a military hospital. By the time he returned all work had stopped on the building for lack of money and my father's anger had cooled.

Another doctor, our general practitioner, was banished from our house in Bedford Square at about the same time. He was a Dr William Swift who was remunerated by what my mother called the "Chinese system"—that is, he was paid only while we were in good health.* With such conscientious frequency did he visit the nursery to make sure that we were all well that one dramatic day, which I remember vividly although I could have been only 6 or 7 at the time, our nanny, in exasperation, drove him out, shouting after him that he was never to enter her nursery again. After that we had a very different kind of doctor whom we clung to for years—Sir Bruce

*My husband refuses to believe that any doctor would agree to such an arrangement. I can say only that this was what I was told by my mother and I still believe it to be true.

†My aunt published an account of her experiences as a militant suffragette in *Prisons and Prisoners* (Heinemann, 1914). She had learnt to type with her left hand.